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The Story of Mankind

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1

In the past, man was like a monkey. He wore no clothes. When winter came, he would descend down from the cold mountains. During that time there was a mother, a son, and a daughter. They had no home. They lived under a tree. They had nothing to protect themselves from the rain. They would get wet, and then their bodies would dry up. One day, while hiding, the mother threw a stone at a rabbit. The rabbit slumped and then died on the spot. The mother knew that her children had not eaten anything since yesterday and had fallen asleep crying. She picked up the dead rabbit and took it home, where her two children, Mooma and Moomi, were asleep. She woke them up.

The rabbit had no hair on its body! They washed their prey only when it rained. Amma quickly pulled out a stone knife and held it tight. Yes, at that time, metals like iron, brass, copper, were not available anywhere. The knife was made of very hard stone. It had been broken cleverly so that its edge was sharp and exposed.

She removed the rabbit's skin and put a piece of meat in Moomi's mouth. She also gave Mooma a piece large enough to prevent him from speaking. There was no fire at that time, and so rabbit meat was eaten raw. Raw meat could not be eaten quickly! So Mooma and Moomi had to chew it with great force.

Moomi was clever. She swallowed a little bit of it. Amma gave her another piece. Mooma also tried to swallow, but the larger piece got stuck in his throat. Amma immediately slapped him on his neck, otherwise poor Mooma would have been in a terrible state. It was raw meat, so it took a long time to eat. Half the rabbit was eaten; the other half was kept aside. Evening was approaching. When Moomi was asked to go into the mountain cave, she refused. Only when Amma hit her, did she go. The cave had a small mouth, filled with a lot of wood. The wind started blowing. Their teeth chattered with the cold. The three of them went and lay down like puppies. At night, the elephant would trumpet, the lion would roar, and the poor three would feel very scared. Finally, Moomi listened to Amma's advice, wasn't it good?

2

Yes, I just started telling you the story of Mooma and Moomi. At that time, there was a lot of suffering. People didn't even know how to use fire. They had to eat raw meat by biting it hard with their teeth. Not thousands, but millions of years passed like that. One day, Chunni—Mooma's mother—ran away from the forest. The forest had caught fire. The animals also fled. Dry branches of trees rubbed against each other. This ignited the fire. First, dry grass and dry wood, then the trees too, began to burn. The poor animals couldn't escape. An

elephant got burned to death. A pig also got burned.
Mooma and Moomi were older. Mooma was six years old and Moomi was eight. The fire didn't last long. The very next day, it rained very heavily. The fire was extinguished. The two children, along with their mother, returned to the forest, which was burned black. They saw the pig roasted. There were so many dead animals lying around. Normally the wolf, leopard, and tiger wouldn't have let Mooma and Moomi get near them! Amma unwrapped a stone knife from her waistband and began cutting the pig quickly. Amma put a large piece in each of the children's mouths and one in her own. She exclaimed, "Oho-oho!"

In those times humans couldn't make many sounds. Hearing Amma's voice, Mooma and Moomi also said, "Oho-oho." The taste of the roasted pig was so delicious that it was beyond words. The pig was huge; they couldn't eat it all! But they ate a lot that day. Everyone danced with joy. The nearby drain had muddy water. But Amma knew of a spring of fresh water. They went there and drank water, some with their mouths, like monkeys. Man too, was like a monkey. He had no clothes on his body, and no utensils for eating or drinking. Not even a clay pot. If the sun got too hot, he sat under a tree. Sometimes he would find a cave to escape the rain, otherwise he would remain drenched.

That day, Mooma and Moomi relished the pig they had roasted

themselves on the fire. When they went there a second time, they found only its bones left. The forest was not short of meat-lovers—there was a fox, a one-eyed jackal, a leopard, a lion, a tiger, a wolf, and a hyena. As the fox ate the leftovers the wolf also arrived. Seeing the wolf, the fox fled, otherwise he would have devoured him. Even after satisfying his hunger, the wolf sat there, licking like crazy. Just then, a tiger—a big one like the one from Manchuria—arrived, growling, and upon hearing its call, the wolf ran away.

All these animals ate only meat; they didn't touch fruits or roots. But Mooma, Moomi, and their mother ate fruits and leaves, like the monkeys of Mussoorie. Amma quickly ate her fruit and fed Mooma and Moomi too. Then she ran to her cave. Mooma and Moomi had forgotten it in play. They had no idea what Amma had done. A thick, dry tree was on fire. The fire was intense that even rain couldn't extinguish it. Amma carried a burning piece of wood from there to her cave. The fire would go out without adding more wood. Amma would gather dry wood from nearby and add it to the fire.

The next day, after a long walk, Amma spotted a fox cub. Amma told the children to be quiet, covering their mouths, and crept closer. Then she threw a stone. The cub fell down. Amma didn't give anyone a piece of the fox’s meat. She just ran to the cave. The children ran too. Amma placed the little fox on the fire to roast. She turned it upside down and burned it black all over.

Then she cut and everyone tasted it, and everyone exclaimed, "Oh, oh!" She also gave a piece to Mooma and Moomi. They all said, "Oh, oh!" as they ate. Now, whenever they found a prey, they would first roast it on the fire. Mooma and Moomi didn't like raw meat anymore. They too would gather dry wood and put it in the fire. The cave was at the foot of the mountain. But the cave was cold in the winter. That winter, they discovered that sitting near the fire drove away the cold. Amma started dancing and folding her hands—"Oh, God, fire! Roasting makes meat soft; it also drives away the cold."

One day a lion came. Amma was frightened. A stone could kill a rabbit, but it could never kill a lion! Frightened, she began to cry, and the children cried too. It was night, so she added more dry leaves and wood to the fire. Everything became visible, just like in daylight. And she saw the lion running away with its tail between its legs. Amma didn't understand the whole story that day. But one day, she understood that even large animals —even elephants—ran away from fire. So, Amma always kept fire and dry leaves nearby. She would explain to the children by saying, "Fire is God."

3

So, Mooma-Moomi's mother discovered the power of the fire god. How wonderful! Now, even lions and tigers ran away on

seeing a lighted fire. The cold vanished just by sitting near the fire. On days when meat was available, Amma would roast it. It tasted better and didn't hurt her teeth. Later, the news of the fire spread to others.

I wrote earlier that people didn't live alone. When the forest is full of tigers, lions, elephants, leopards, and bears, no one wants to live alone! Sometimes, during the rainy season, they would dig a deep pit using tools made of bones, wood, or stone. It would take fifty men and women to dig the pit. Then at night, everyone would take dry wood and light a fire on bamboo poles.

Elephants grazed in herds eating wild bananas and bamboos. Several hundred men would play instruments made of wood and leather, making “ho-ho” sounds. Hearing the sounds, the elephants fled for their lives. It was just fire, but the elephants thought it was a ghost, bigger than them. They didn't even look back. Running wildly that day, two elephants fell into the pit. They couldn't come up. The rest fled for their lives.

The men had set fires under and above the trees. The elephants kept running. The people turned back. The elephants in the pit would have died of hunger. After a long time, they would have weakened, rotted and died! What did the humans do? They had already collected grass and leaves in large quantities. So, quickly they lit a fire and threw it into the pit. There was no

room to escape. The poor elephants screamed and burned. Fifty people burnt dry grass and threw it into the pit. The elephants howled for an hour, then first the baby elephant fell silent, then the older elephant. But even then, the people didn't let up. They kept throwing dry sticks and wood. They filled the pit. It was very late at night, so they returned to their homes. Home was the same cave where the mothers had been sitting with their children, lighting a fire. Now even the lions and tigers knew that man possessed the god of fire. They all ate together whatever was in the cave. At that time, no one said, “This is mine, that is yours.” The mothers oversaw everything, and the men obeyed them.

Everyone left early the next morning. They even took their children with them. People didn’t talk then. They just gestured while waving their hands, making “hah” and “hoo-hoo sounds. Everyone reached the pit. Most of yesterday’s fire had died out. A little distance away, there was a waterfall. In no time, they dug a channel with their horns. Water began to flow into the pit. The residual fire was extinguished. Not anyone could go down into the pit with his stone knife. Everyone listened to the obeyed the eldest mother. First, she sent mothers with their children. They ate the meat, sometimes throwing a large piece up, then another piece. They ate the elephant for days. And when it started to rot, they abandoned it.

4

Yesterday I talked about elephant hunting, didn't I? Those bare-chested people were like the Chinese, like the Tibetans. But they were of the Lepcha (Kirat) tribe. Their noses were a little flat, their faces were sparse, and their complexion were a little pale. During the winters they lived in the forests of Siliguri, and in the summer, they went to the forests of Kalimpong or Darjeeling. They went not for sightseeing, but to find food. If they found prey, it was a great pleasure! But prey wasn't available every day!

Also, by now the animals had become smarter. The animals could also hunt humans. But humans kept fires in their caves. Fire would scare the animals away. Honey was also very dear to them, and children loved honey more than any other thing else. But beehives were on high mountains and tall trees. When humans reached there, the bees bit them. The bites of small flies weren't very painful, but larger flies like bumblebees could bite and kill.

Men searched for fruits and roots. They dried and stored them right in their cave. One good thing at that time was that, men and women, old and young, all worked together and ate together. There was no division; everything belonged to everyone. Even their children didn't fight among themselves,

saying, “My, mine!” They didn't have many toys. They had some clay animals — dogs, goats, cows, and even elephants. At that time, there were no animals living with humans. Even dogs wouldn't come near them, because then humans would kill and eat the dogs. Back then, humans wouldn't spare any animal.

A human child was just like a monkey's baby. When it was very small, the mother would carry it around in her lap; otherwise, it would walk on its own, following her or playing outside the cave. Children were very afraid of tigers, lions, and elephants. When such animals came, the children ran to the cave, where the fire god burned. If they felt hungry, they begged for food from the old grandmother sitting in the cave. She would give them some leftover. In reality, the children’s mothers always provided for them. The children would sometimes get into fights and then they got beaten up.

Twenty-five people would live together. How could they live alone? They couldn't hunt or do any work alone. Once they were in a group, they would sing and dance a lot. Sometimes, the inhabitants of one cave would fight with the inhabitants of another, smashing their heads with stones and sticks, killing them, and even eating the dead. Such were the people in those days!

Some children were good. When a mischievous boy hit a weaker one, the good boy would beat him up. All the boys

loved the good boy and listened to him. Mooma was one such boy – he was very strong and good natured.

5

There's a story of two siblings — Lulu and Luli. Mother loved them dearly. One day, Lulu caught a cold. They always lived naked. They got wet and exposed to the cold wind, which caused him to develop a fever. At that time, there was no doctor, or hospital. There were no villages, no homes. The patient was given whatever medicine the old grandmother prescribed. Lulu's old grandmother said, “He's possessed by a ghost. Sacrifice an animal to appease the fire god. Then he'll get well.” After much effort, a small rat was found. They killed it and offered it to the fire god.

While roasting, its smell spread. Lulu even got a whiff of it. He called her mother and quietly said, “I want to eat the rat.” Mother was afraid. What if the fire god got angry? When she asked her grandmother, she said, “When it is half roasted give it to Lulu.” This must be the god's offering. When Lulu received the offering, he secretly gave it to Luli, and Luli called the other girls. She said, “God's offering is not to be eaten alone! We will all eat it together.” The fever was mild, but his taste buds had deteriorated. Lulu didn't like fruit, meat, or honey. Poor Amma felt very sad. She prayed to the fire god, “Oh, fire

god, please heal my Lulu." Lulu, like Amma, folded his hands and greeted the fire god. The fever went away on the third day. Four days later, Lulu was back to running and playing. Luli was also happy. Everyone in the cave was happy.

6

Man lived for millions of years with weapons made of bone and stone. Well, he had discovered the fire god. Instead of utensils, they used banana or other leaves.

This is what happened one day. Four to six miles apart, there were two caves, each housing two groups. One day, Uma Dadi's men went to remove a honeycomb from a mountainside. But Suma Dadi's men were already there, watching. Bees enter the hives at night. That's when Uma Dadi's men went. They were just reaching the hive when Suma's men ran and attacked. They started screaming. Uma's men were few. Suma's men beat them hard. No one died, but some of them suffered head injuries and were covered in blood. They all fled home, their lives broken.

Suma Dadi said angrily, "How dare you!" The next morning, the skin drums played loud sounds. Armed with weapons made of stone and bone, Suma's men set off. Uma Dadi's men were also vigilant. They sat in their cave. As soon as the enemy came near, they started pelting them with stones. Yes, there were

more women than men among the fighters. They were all very brave. Despite being hit by stones, they reached the cave. Suma challenged Uma, “Come on, why are you hiding?” Uma was not afraid either. Men and women from both sides got into a scuffle. They attacked not only with stone weapons but also bit with their teeth. Ten of Uma's men died on the spot. Five of Suma's. The rest fled. What kind of people were they! All this killing for a little bit of honey!

7

Now listen, Mooma and Moomi adopted a dog. Dogs used to live in the forest, just like foxes and jackals. People ran away when they saw them. Wolves, too, are like dogs; they would bite and eat them. Wolves would always lie and wait for children. At that time, people even hunted dogs for food. Mooma and Moomi were small children, but they too went hunting. That day, many dogs were killed. In a hidden bush, seven or eight puppies were crawling on top of each other, and barking. Mooma's mother spotted them.

Everyone ran there. Until now, people only killed and ate puppies and adult dogs. When Mooma and Moomi saw the puppies, they loved them. Mooma picked up two, and Moomi picked another two. Other children also came running. Everyone picked up the puppies. The puppies were from two or

three bitches. They hadn't even opened their eyes. They had not even started drinking milk. When the puppies did not eat the boys wanted to beat them. They offered them meat, but the puppies wouldn't eat. All the puppies died within a day or two. Mooma and Moomi's mother was very clever. She mixed water with honey and fed the puppies.

At that time, no man kept pet animals. Mother couldn't save all four puppies, but two survived. The puppies were named Chilla and Chilli. Both of them opened their eyes. After a few days Chilla and Chilli started eating meat too. They grew fat. They were small, sp Mooma and Moomi would carry them around in their laps, letting their friends play with them. Both of them grew up in six months. They were both red in colour. Mooma and Moomi used to put them to sleep in their lap. Sleeping with dogs in the winter helped the children stay warm, right?

They were the first pet dogs. They were not very clever. Still, the dogs came running when called. People had never seen dogs, or rather, they had only seen dead dogs being roasted. They didn't even realize they were their own. One day, they were walking with the children. They saw a rabbit running nearby. They both ran, screaming. How could they catch it? But some people also came from the other direction. The rabbit turned and landed right into Chilla-Chilli's mouth. They killed it, and started eating it. Mooma and Moomi's mouths were

watering, but Chilla-Chilli growled when they came closer. They couldn't eat all the meat. Mooma and Moomi roasted and ate the rest. There was an uproar among everyone, “The dogs have hunted well.” Everyone began to think, “How wonderful it would be if there were ten or twenty such dogs!”
From then on, the dog became man's friend.

8

It would be difficult to follow the story if names of the children were frequently changed. So, the man's children’s names would remain the same — Mooma and Moomi. They wouldn't be Lula and Luli. Thousands of years passed. In the Kanaila forest, the same Lepcha (Kirat) people lived. They lived in huts. Fifty to sixty men, women, adults, and children. They had a single hut, very heavy, made of straw. In one corner, there was a fire god. People would hunt in the forest, and sometimes fish from the pond.

One day, Chunnu and Munni, along with their friends, their aunt's children, entered the pond, saying, “We too will fish.” Their mother and aunts forbade them from going into the water. After everyone had entered the forest, the army of children went to the pond — and then, into the water. Staying on the shore, he began to fish with his hands: how could he have caught a fish that way? Mooma caught a crab. He pulled

it out of the water and saw its many large legs. He threw it back into the water, trembling with fear. An older, smarter boy explained, “It was a thing to eat. No one else, but could Mooma catch such a big crab. Mother and aunt would have been so happy to see it!” Now Mooma began to regret it.

But how could a crab thrown into the water be caught again? The boys were trying to catch the fish. At that moment, one of the aunt's daughters screamed loudly from the water, “I’m dead!” She cried loudly, holding her finger. She held the thumb of her right hand. Mooma touched it and saw that it was bleeding. All the children panicked. Aunt's daughter was in great pain. Tears flowed from both her eyes. She rolling on the ground and cried in agony. The other children picked her up and took her to Grandma in the hut. Grandma said, “Did you catch a fish?” “Yes, I did.” I grabbed it tightly. She started thrashing around. Then something felt like a thorn in my thumb. It hurts a lot. Oh, Amma, I’m dead!

Grandma said, “Munni, don't cry. It was a lionfish. Its thorn is very sharp, and it hurts a lot when it bites.” One day, when they saw a lionfish. Mama said, “This is the red lionfish.” She was still alive, and squirming. Amma asked little Munni, “Will you take it, Munni?” And she picked her up with her hand.
At that time, people neither knew salt nor ate it. Salting it would make the lionfish die and it would forget to prick with its fork. Amma roasted it and everyone found it very sweet. If

you hold it firmly in the middle of its head, the lionfish won't prick you with its fork.

9

Mooma and Moomi still lived in the forest. There were no mountains near Kanaila, so they built huts wherever they went. One day, the children went to the riverbank with their mother and aunts. They were playing a hunting game with their bows and arrows. They would tie a piece of bone or hard stone to the arrow. Back then, humans didn't know about iron or copper. The children were just playing. They applied glue to the arrow and fixed a thorn on it. One day, Suma shot an arrow at a bird. It hit. The thorn hurt the little bird. The poor thing started fluttering. The children caught it. It was so small, what could they do?

One day, Mooma and Moomi and all the other children in the house were very surprised. That day too, they were playing on the riverbank. Across the river, they saw a lot of people making noise. At first, they didn't know what was going on. When they got closer, they saw that the people were both from their village and from another village. Actually, there were no villages at that time? There was just a large cluster of huts. The people from the other village were also from the Kirat-Lepcha tribe. They understood each other's language. They

rarely quarreled among themselves.

But then, the children saw that the villagers had captured three other people, including a woman. Their victim's skin was very dark, like coal. Seeing them, Mooma and Moomi's entire platoon was terrified. Their own skin was fair and slightly pale. They couldn't understand what the victims said. They spoke a different language. They were beaten badly. They cried a lot. The children gathered courage and went near to look. Mooma rubbed his hand on the woman's body. What a fool he was! He thought her body was covered with black paint. Mooma too, applied black paint to his body when playing ghost games.

Today, the children learned that black people existed, and they spoke a different language. They were discussing this, when an older boy said, "Kill those three, offer them to the fire god, then eat their roasted flesh." Yes, people back then were just as savage. They had no idea what was good or bad. All they knew was that they should love their family members and give them food. In those days it was a struggle to fill one's own tummy. They weren't afraid during the day, but as soon as night fell, they would saw ghosts everywhere. Even the elders didn't step out at night. Back then people were like that.

10

One day, Chunnu and Munni found a tiny fawn. It had just been born a couple of hours earlier. Hunters arrived. The mother deer ran away, but the baby couldn't flee. Chunnu and Munni came. They found the baby fawn adorable. They picked it up and brought it home. They tied it with a leather rope. It drank milk, but didn't eat meat. People wanted to offer it to the fire god, but the children wouldn't let them. They put soft grass in its mouth.

At first, it wouldn't eat. It was about to die from lack of milk. Just then their aunt had new baby. So, the aunt breastfed the fawn for a couple of days. Then, it started eating grass. Around the same time, the bitch also gave birth to her puppies. She was a good bitch, and she also breastfed the fawn. Yes, now man had dogs. Dogs helped him hunt and kept watch at night. They didn't bite their own. They would bark at the sight of others. The dogs also recognized the deer, so they didn't bother it.

The man's children played a lot with the baby deer. The puppies would run around and play. Bones were available in plenty and so were skins. The boys would cut soft green grass and bring it. With what did they cut? With a stone knife. They would even tear the grass apart with their hands. Gradually, the deer grew. It was a female deer. If it were a male deer, it

would have horns, and when Chunnu and Munni troubled, it would use its horns. Munni would caress its head. Chunnu would take his hand near its mouth, and the deer would lick it. Chunnu would kiss its mouth, and so would Munni. The children had to share some of their own food with the dogs and puppies. The deer only ate grass.

Even the deer knew it wasn't good to go into the forest alone. Munni would explain it to her, “Queen Deer, there are lions, tigers, and wolves in the forest. If they find you alone, they'll devour you.” The deer would simply roam around with the children, even run. No one could keep pace with her. One day, Chunnu insisted on a race. The deer ran, but in comparison Chunnu's pace was like a tortoise. The deer went far ahead. All the children laughed and clapped. The deer defeated Chunnu. One day, even the dog ran, but it kept its pace with the deer. How fast was the deer!

During the rainy season, the river's water level rose. The deer was left on the other side. Night began to fall. Everyone began to fear — the wolf would surely eat her at night. All the children called out aloud, “Come deer, come deer. Night is coming.” The deer kept thinking, kept thinking, then jumped into the water. Later, she swam to the other bank.

11

Yes, there were two kinds of people, black and yellow! They always quarreled with each other. What could one do with them? They were wild people. In those days, even brothers and sisters quarreled.

But Papa knew that both children will soon stop fighting, or else people will start calling them savages. Once, Chunnu and Munni did something amazing. Back then, barley, wheat, rice, mangoes, and berries all grew in the forest, just like grass and vegetation. And they all didn't grow at the same place. One day, Chunnu saw ripe barley. Seeing the grains lying there, he picked them up and whispered in Munni's ear, “Let's play a game. We'll sow the grains in the ground.” They did just that.

The barley seeds sprouted. Then, without water, they began to wither. They would have dried up, but luckily it rained. The barley grew large. They released their deer, and it began to graze on the barley. This freed them from the daily chore of collecting grass. Chunnu had shown the way. After that all the boys planted barley and fed their deer on it. Humans hadn't yet learned to eat grains.

When grass and water ran low in the forest, animals would migrate to other forests. Humans would leave their huts and

follow them to other places. Grass was the food of animals, and animals were the food for humans. When humans began sowing grains in the forest, they would stay there a little longer, admiring their greenery. Leaving their old huts would make Chunnu, Munni, and their companions very sad. Sometimes they would even say, “We'll stay here; we like this place.” But with the animals gone and the ponds dried, how could they survive? The children had to leave, though they cried.

Once these people lived in a mountain forest. Behold, there was a huge python there. It looked like a huge tree. Black-faced monkeys came. One monkey was very mischievous. If the monkey hadn't been careful, the python would have caught him and swallowed him. The monkey was very agile, and the python was very lazy. By the time he turned his head to catch the monkey, he would have jumped to the other side. Once, he jumped and sat on the python's back. The python slithered and shook its body, but the monkey kept sitting, laughing. The other monkeys didn't dare, but they watched the spectacle, clapping their hands. People started calling that monkey brave.

12

Chunnu and Munni lived in the mountains, in a cave. From there, they could see far and wide. One day, they saw a

lion walking by, with a monkey in front of it. Grandmother had told them that lions don't eat fruit, and monkeys don't eat meat. But the lion could certainly eat monkey meat. Then, the monkey made some kind of gesture, and the lion stopped. The monkey went alone and climbed a tree. A small river flowed nearby. Three or four wild cows were grazing there. The cows were all wild at that time.

The monkey shouted loudly, “Poo!” The lion came down from the tree in one leap. And in the second leap, it landed with its teeth and paws on a cow. The cow fell with a thud, and the other cows ran away. The lion drank the blood and ate the meat. Chunnu and Munni started asking, “Why did the monkey get the cow killed? If the one-eyed jackal had killed it, it would have been fine; he would have gotten the lion's leftovers.” Munni said, “The monkey thinks if the lion is my friend, I'm a big man too. He likes to boast. He didn't understand that the day the lion goes hungry without prey, he won't let it go.”

From that day on, Munni would curse the monkeys whenever she saw them, even throwing stones at them. Some people would say, “This couldn’t happen. Perhaps, some grandmother made it up.” The children would daily pester their grandmother, “Tell me a story, tell us a story. From where would the poor lady get three or four new stories every day?”

A long time passed. One day, Chunnu and Munni, while wandering in the forest, came down and found a small baby monkey lying there. In the herd of elephants, there was a huge elephant named Master. When another elephant grew stronger, Master chased it away. Now the other one had also grown strong. It returned to fight. The two fought fiercely, trunk to trunk, teeth clashing. One even lost half a tooth. Both were covered in blood. Finally, Master Elephant ran for his life. While the two elephants were fighting, roaring, a baby monkey fell from a female monkey's lap. The female monkey didn't have the courage to climb down and pick the baby. She ran away from the forest with all the other monkeys.

The elephants fought and left. The baby monkey got tired of crying. Munni picked up a stone to hit it. Then, seeing it alone, she felt pity. When she approached, the baby began to tremble. She picked it up. She put her thumb in its mouth, and the baby started sucking. You must know it was drinking milk. The poor thing was hungry. Then she squeezed the fruit. The baby monkey turned out to be a master of play. Sometimes he would climb on Chunnu and Munni's neck, sometimes on their back. When he saw ripe fruit, he would run up the tree and shake its branch. Many fruits would fall down with a thud. Chunnu said, “We hunt fruit with our monkey, just like we hunt animals with a dog.”

13

Many thousands of years had passed. Now Munni was older, and Chunnu was younger. They were six or seven years old, but very smart. People sharpened their stone weapons by polishing them. They made knives and axes from the largest flint, not just any stone. They even cut wood with it. If the edge became blunt, they would grind and sharpen it again. There were hard stones near the cave. Munni also picked up a stone.

The two siblings often fought, but they shared their food and drinks. They would make their own knife by grinding the stone and then cut a small stick with it. There was a large lake at the foot of the mountain. Mom, Dad, and others would go fishing there. People then, didn't even know how to make nets. They used stone weapons and bent horn spears to kill big fish. They even made a boat. How? They would cut down soft trees with stone tools. When the tree dried up, they set fire to it. When a third of it burned, they extinguished the fire and, used the same stone tools, to scrape out a lot of coal from the tree's belly.

A little more digging made a boat. They used the boat for hunting. In winter, many birds came to the lake from even further north, from Manchuria, because it would snow and become very cold there. Food would get buried in the snow,

and the poor creatures would go hungry, so they would fly and travel to Tibet. Men killed birds with arrows. Munni's father had learned another trick. Men first made clay pots with smooth clay and baked them red hot. Water could be heated in those pots. Water was previously carried in skins, but now it could be carried in clay pots. Munni's father put a clay pot on his head. The pot had turned black from being kept on the fire for a long time. He drilled two holes in the pot to see with his eyes.

At night, he would put his head in the pot and go into the lake. Slowly, he would sink and slide in the water. The birds would be fooled into thinking that a pot was swaying. Then he would go near the birds, grab their legs, and pull them under water. Taken by surprise the poor bird couldn't even flap its wings to alert others. It would die within a short time. He would then tie the bird to the rope tied around his waist, and the pot would start moving again.

In this way, he would hunt many birds at night and then emerge from the water. In winter, it would feel cold in the water at first, but not later on. People didn't make clothes then. They would wear bear or sheep skin. He would sometimes roast the meat over fire, sometimes cook it in small portions in a pot. Grandma didn't like this; she would eat the meat raw. She still had teeth, otherwise, it would have been very difficult. Mother would also sometimes go fishing.

14

What kind of a person was Munna? White, red and yellow clay was readily available in the mountains. One day, he saw his mother, father, aunt, and uncle all drawing pictures in a cave. They were drawing these pictures for worship. Back then people feared ghosts and spirits. They worshipped to appease the gods and spirits. But this was untrue, as ghosts and gods don't exist. But in those, people's understanding was limited! Iron and copper were found in the earth, but they didn't know to smelt them by burning with coal.

But during that era people in villages of China, were making coal. Then, what did Munna do? He mixed red colour, made himself a small wooden pen, and then went to one end of the cave and started drawing. First, he drew a lion, then a monkey. The monkey sat on a tree, and the lion was on the ground. The monkey was pointing his finger towards the grazing cows. Then Munna made many pigs and men, just like himself. The men had long hair on their heads, just like women. They had short moustaches, too. Lepcha people have very few moustaches. Then Munna also drew two elephants fighting.

For days, Munna kept drawing pictures, and he forget all about play. He was working at the edge of the cave. After seven or eight days, one of his friends wondered, "Where does Munna spend his whole day?" He followed Munna. He saw him and

reported it to his uncle. His uncle went and secretly watched. Munna painted better than his father and uncle. And he was just seven! News spread and then everyone came to see. Munna had drawn naked men, just like the way they lived in the summer. Munna wasn't the first to paint. But this was probably the first exhibition of paintings. Other villagers heard about it and came to see it too. Everyone started calling him “Munna the Painter.” The paintings were so well made and realistic that some seemed as if they would speak any moment.

Munna observed the paintings his elders made. He wanted to make the eyes, noses, and ears look the same. Then, he keenly observe the faces, hands, and noses of his friends and drew them. Munna loved this work. After years of observing and drawing, he began to realize that not everyone's eyes and ears were the same. He filled several caves with his paintings. Thousands of years passed. Rainwater fell on some paintings, erasing them. But some remained deep inside the cave. They faded, but remained there. Even today, such paintings can be found in caves of Europe and India.

15

Man survived on stone weapons for over five hundred thousand years. But his children must have grown tired listening to his story. These new Munna and Munni were born

in the Copper Age. Man, once found a piece of copper in the mountains. The edge of a copper tool remained sharp for a long time. Munni's father thought, “I wish I could find another piece like this.” One day, his hut caught fire. He saw that the piece of copper melted and became a something else. He melted it further and saw a heavy stone whose colour was like copper. He melted that too. This is how man began extracting copper from heavy stones. He also found iron mixed in the stone. Iron requires a stronger heat to melt it. After 2000-2500 years, man also began making iron. In the Copper Age, people began making better clay pots. They also began sowing grains in the fields and raised cows. First, they killed cows for meat, now they raised them for milk. The Chinese didn't even know that cow and buffalo milk could be drunk. Perhaps even the ancestors of the Lepcha and Tamang didn't drink milk. Later, people who came from the West; drank a lot of milk.

By now Munna and Munni had started wearing coarse clothes. Amma and Papa also started wearing very thick clothes. Then clothes were made not from cotton, but of reeds, hemp bark, and even wool. Men captured sheep and goats from the forest and raised them. The sheep didn't realize that man raised them to later kill them for food. If they had known, they wouldn't have surely run away! Man is an intelligent creature! That's why men; despite being related to monkeys, were able to catch elephants. Have you seen a circus show where several elephants put on a collective show together at a man's

command? Yes, but one important thing. In the past, Amma would go hunting with Papa. Once upon a time, the woman was the master of all. All the men obeyed her. Back then, a sister was considered even more important than a brother. But now, after discovering copper, men started sowing the fields, and they entrusted Amma and the girls with household chores.

The women would cook and do the kitchen work. Earlier, girls were taught the same games as boys. During fights the women also went to war armed with stone weapons. As time passed, women were considered inferior and men superior. Men became the breadwinners, women the feeders. So, Munni started playing with dolls, and Munna with bows and arrows. Now, Munni knits sweaters for dolls, and Amma doesn't let boys do such work. She says, “It's a girl's job.”

16

Munna and Munni also kept a dog. Now, humans kept sheep and goats. All goats and sheep, cows and buffaloes were wild then, but humans domesticated them. Lions, tigers, and wolves coveted the sheep and goats. As soon as these animals came near the village, the dogs would start barking, and would alert the people. Munna and Munni also drank milk, so they became quite strong. One day, the children were playing outside the village. Their dog was with them. Their ball had

wandered away. Munna went to fetch it. He saw a one-eyed jackal sitting in a ditch. Munna asked the one-eyed jackal, "Master, how long have you been bothering us here?"

The jackal stood up. He knew that Munna will soon call his dog. So, the jackal slowly slithered away towards the forest. But Munna did not remain quiet. He called the dog's name, and the dog came running. Munna pointed his finger at the jackal, and the dog started chasing him. The jackal ran with all his might. “Here we go, here we go!” shouted all the boys and they too ran behind the jackal. Finally, the dog caught the jackal. The jackal, tucking its tail between its legs, bared its teeth as the dog approached him. Even then, the dog bit him at several places. The children came near and pelted stones at the jackal. Even then, the jackal remained unfazed. Just then, some other men arrived with other dogs. All the dogs together bit the jackal. Then, when the people's sticks fell upon it, the jackal died.

Why did they kill the jackal? Because the one-eyed jackal had come for the tender meat of young goats. But things turned out differently. People quickly lit a fire. Someone had left a smouldering fire. After adding dry wood, it burned again. People placed the one-eyed jackal on the fire, roasted it, by turning it over and over. Then, they took out copper knives from their waists, and cut it into pieces. The children were given the first pieces. Everyone ate the roasted meat with

great relish. In those days, people ate the meat of all animals. Just as today, every person's name is prefixed with the name of his caste, similarly, in those days, the names of people were appended with the names of animals. People did not kill those animals who formed part of their name. As no Jackal clan existed there, so no one spared the one-eyed jackal. In no time, the one-eyed jackal was swallowed up by the people!
What a treat the people gave the one-eyed jackal!

17

So, Munna and Munni were now in the Copper Age. Millions of years before them, humans relied solely on stone weapons, hunting, and wild fruits. Now, Munni's mother kneaded clay and made utensils with her own hands. Munni would also sit down to help her mother. But three-year-old Munni sometimes ate clay too. Even then, her mother didn't mind. Mother made a clay monkey and a bear for Munni. Munni's monkey and bear dried in the sun along with her mother's utensils. They turned red after being baked in the fire. Munna was older than Munni. He loved his sister very much. He ground coal, mixed fat with it, made black paint, and brought it back, saying, “Dear sister, I'll make a mouth and nose for your monkey and bear.”

Taking Munni's monkey, Munna first made a face and then

drew black lines for the eyes. He added a tail that rose upwards towards the back. Soon he finished painting the bear. At that time, there were no separate potters or blacksmiths. People did everything with their own hands. Some had good hands and could make beautiful utensils and toys. Others were not so skilled. Munni's toys were very good. One day, Amma even made a clay doll: but it didn't open and close its eyes like a modern Japanese doll!

Now we are in the Sputnik era. At that time, no one could even think of trains and motor vehicles. Children didn't have books and didn't go to school. Their learnt through play. They memorized many songs while singing. Grandma would tell them stories. Stone Age man knew very few words. His counting skills were also quite limited. He could count only up to ten or twenty. There were only a few human made artifacts around. If he didn't have a house, why would he need furniture? But after discovering copper, man began building mud houses. Small ones. He would chop wood with his copper axe. He also made a sickle.

At that time some people started making good axes. The children all started coaxing him, "Grandpa, make us an axe!" For how many people could Poor Grandpa made axes? He also had to work in his field to grow grains. People said, "Grandpa, make us an axe, and we'll give you some of our own grain." So, blacksmith Grandpa, didn't have to till his fields. He just made

axes at home, and grains and meat were given to him by others. Clay pots and many other things were made in every home. Munni was very happy. Her brother could paint monkeys and bears so beautifully! Munni's friends also wanted similar toys. Munna painted clay toys for them too.

18

It was a village inhabited by people from the Copper Age. Their fields were nearby. Paddy stood green during the rainy season. They had taken great pains to planted it. But, at that time, there were few fields and more forests. They were afraid during the day, but at night, wild cows and deer would gather. People would scare them away with sticks and stones. People couldn't stay awake all night! In those days there were elephant hordes in the forest, who would come into the fields not alone but in groups of twenty-five to thirty. They would run away from the fire, because they were afraid of it.

Once, fed up with the elephants, Munna's villagers dug a deep trench in the path to the field, covering it with grass and soil, so that the hole was invisible. The elephants came. The whole village swung their sticks. People went out beating drums, shrieking and shouting. The elephants ran the other way. But people came from that side too. But the elephants were clever, they all avoided the pit, but a small baby elephant fell into it.

The baby elephant was so afraid that it couldn't even stand up. People fattened him by feeding it cows' milk. They simply filled a pot with milk, and the elephant dipped its trunk in it. It sucked it up, and then poured it into its mouth. One day, Munni saw the white milk and was tempted. She ran to the baby elephant. The baby elephant played a lot with both - the human child and the cow's calf. So, two-year-old Munni went to the baby elephant. The baby elephant had just dipped its trunk in the milk.

Munni said, “Don't drink it all, give some to me too.” Do you know what the baby elephant did? The baby elephant simply put her trunk in Munni's mouth. Munni opened her mouth too. She was very impudent. She gulped it down. Her stomach was small; how much could she drink? She pulled her mouth away and said, “No, now you drink.” After that, Munni and the baby elephant became very good friends. Munni would fight and get her mother to fill the pot with milk. Then Munni would call out, “Munnu, come and drink some milk.”

On hearing Munni’s voice the baby elephant would come running, with its trunk raised. Munni's dog didn't like this. Even though it was a small baby, it was still an elephant. Sometimes it would run away in fear. For a long time, Munni drank milk from the elephant's trunk. As the baby elephant grew older, it stopped drinking milk. Even Munni started to find the milk bland. The baby elephant would carry Munni on

its back to the trees in the forest. Munni ate ripe fruits. Man didn't plant gardens yet. He gathered fruits from the trees in the forest. That elephant lived for a long time. When Munni became a grandmother, the elephant grew up. He became a huge king elephant. He was loved by everyone.

The frogs were holding a meeting near a pond. Their chairman was a very fat yellow frog. First, they all sang a song together. What was the song, “croak-croak.” Then the frogs started dancing. Standing on their hind legs, they lifted their front legs. Twenty frogs would dance and slide side-to-side at a time. It wasn't fun without the drum. Just then, a mouse arrived with a drum hanging from its neck. All the frogs greeted the mouse. When the drum dance began, and it didn't take long for people to wake up at dawn. All the frogs got tired of dancing, but the mouse didn't. Finally, the mouse began to dance, playing the drum. As soon as dawn broke, the eagles and crows started making a noise. The frogs jumped into the water. The mouse was about to be killed when Munni woke up. People said, “Munni saved the mouse.”

19

As I already mentioned in the story that for millions of years in the Stone Age, it was women, not men, ruled. When man was a complete savage, women ruled. When man began wearing

clothes, farming, and staying at home, the queen's rule was over. Isn't it true that men rule everywhere these days? That day, Munni had a wonderful dream about the Copper Age.

20

That Munna of the Copper Age was very clever. One day, when Munna and Munni were young, despite all the persuasion, Munni wanted to stay with Munna. Along with other children they went to guard the fields. Then there were thick forests, and animals from the jungle would come and graze in the fields. At that time, corn hadn't yet arrived from America. Otherwise, they would have eaten plenty of roasted corn. But when they went to the field, someone said to the children, “There's only a little water left in this pond. Look, how many fish are frolicking.” Munni said, “Why don't we build a small dam and throw the water to the other side? The fish will stay here. And there's plenty of dry wood too to roast.” The older boys also joined in.

First, they and formed a dam using mud. They had a copper shovel, so digging mud didn't take long. In Stone Age, it would have taken much longer. Then they scooped the water out with their hands, leaving only the mud. Some fish knew how to burrow into the mud. They did that.

Some, unaware, floundering on the surface. The children first

caught them and put them in the dry pit. Seeing so many fish, all the children felt hungry. Munna said, “Friends, if you want, then two-three of us will roast the fish over a fire and give them to you.” Everyone exclaimed, “Wow, brother, Munna, that would be wonderful!”

Munni joined Munna along with two other boys. One boy ran to fetch fire from the village. Meanwhile, the other boys began catching fish hidden in the slushy mud. The *garai-bhuti* fish struggled a lot, but were quickly caught. The lionfish and mangours were very sweet fish, but their spines were so sharp that they would cut into the hand. Only two mature boys knew how to catch them. They would kill some with their thick sticks and catch others. Munna's companions would fry the fish and feed them to the others. Where would they go to wash the dirt off their hands?

After much persuasion, the worker boys would bite off a piece or two with their own mouths. The fish was of excellent quality. There were crabs, and snake-like vaam and goije fishes too. They wouldn't be so sweet when cooked in water. The village wasn't far away. The boys who brought the fire told the villagers about it. That's why mothers, aunts, and grandmothers from all over the village gathered there. The children were overjoyed. They all said, “Today, we children will fry fish and feed everyone.”

There were plenty of fish. The children then set about frying and feeding everyone.

21

In the Copper Age, people certainly began sowing fields, but they didn't know how to plow. They simply dug the ground with small, pointed tools made of copper or wood, scattered the seeds, and the grain would germinate. If it rained on time, the crops ripened, otherwise they withered. If they lived solely on grain, they would have starved. Now they began rearing cattle. They rarely found prey, and when they couldn't, they killed their domestic animals. They didn't even know how to drink milk. The Chinese are just now learning to drink milk, and that too in cities. The people of the Copper Age finally learned that they could plow the fields. Leaves and wood had been rotting for millions of years, so the seeds would germinate in the fertile sown soon after they were sown.

The children caught so many fish that day! They ate themselves, and also fed everyone else. They played such games which helped them find food. Man, still hunted. He had no books, no pen, no paper. He didn't know how to read. They would listen to stories, memorize a few songs, and start singing them. The men were very strong. The yellow Kirats lived in the north, and the coal-black Nishads lived in the

south. The two tribes sometimes fought for hunting grounds. Then there was a lot of violence. They wouldn't even spare children. But the fighting wasn't too intense. There were very few people at that time, and there was a lot of forest land.

In those days, people survived well by hunting and farming. They would build huts for their homes. They wore cloth in winter, or they would simply wear bark and leaves. In the Stone Age, everyone lived together, worked together, and ate together. If one went hungry, then everyone went hungry. It wasn't like someone ate and others starved. Now, in the Copper Age, everyone lived separately. They built separate huts and lived with their own children. They earned their own food and ate on their own. If someone had excess food, they would feed another person, but they would say, “First work for us, then we'll feed you.” Because of hunger, people would say, “Okay.” Because they were hungry, people became servants.

People began to consider servants inferior and started discriminating against them. There were small men and big men, servants and masters. Sometimes the master would get angry and beat the servant severely. The master-servant relationship we see today originated in this era. In the Stone Age, people were like monkeys, but at that time, there were no servants or masters. There were no sahibs or babus. Everyone worked with their own hands.

22

Munni, from the Copper Age, once found herself in a difficult situation. She went far into the forest with several other children to gather berries. All carried bows and arrows. They all knew how to climb trees. Thousands of berry bushes grew along the riverbank. They were wild. Humans hadn't cultivated gardens yet. The trees were laden with black berries. They were so sweet, that the black bumblebees were savouring them. There were plenty of berries lying on the ground below, but how could the children resist climbing the tree? They got up and shook the branch slightly, and a basket full of berries fell down. Everyone sat down and ate. The little ones also ate some. The summer had just ended and the rains had begun. They didn't need clothes. They carried baskets nearby to bring anything they found.

They filled their stomachs eating berries. They also filled their baskets. It was still early in the day. The children were in no hurry. They had a bamboo instrument and a mouth flute. Soon, dancing and singing began. Just then, a boy noticed something big and black coming from the mountain. Hunting boys have very sharp eyes, nose, and ears. One boy shouted, “Hey, elephant! They're coming this way!” The children would have run toward the village.

But what could they do? The village was very far away. There

was a huge banyan tree nearby. The wisest boy said, “Let’s climb that banyan tree.” He began to lead the small children up. Everyone sat at the very topmost branch of the tree. The older boys weren't afraid, but the younger ones trembled with fear. Older ones tried to reason with them. Back then, humans lived among wild animals. How could fear help? A little later, the elephants arrived. Even the eldest boy could only count to ten. He began counting the elephants — “Not one, not two, ten. Oh no! Even more!” There were big ones, and small ones. The king elephant looked like a mountain. All the elephants raised their trunks and did all sorts of things.

The eldest boy said softly, “The trunk is their nose, and they drink water through their trunks. Without a trunk, the elephant couldn't eat or drink. Even when lying down, its mouth couldn't reach the ground.” By its smell, the elephants realized it was a banyan tree. Many human children were sitting on it. Humans are the elephants' enemies. And those sitting on the tree were their enemies’ children. They must not be left alive. But their trunks couldn't reach the children. They broke off the small branches and pushed it, but the tree only shook. Then the poor elephants returned.

23

Now hear yesterday's tale in full. About twenty children had climbed a large banyan tree. Nearly thirty elephants stood below, swaying and bellowing. The elephants looked at the children, and the children looked at them. No matter how high they raised their trunks, the elephants couldn't reach the children. Their howls were loud. But the children were still half wild. They weren't afraid. They happily sat on the tree branch. They were hungry, but they had plenty of berries to eat. After eating, the children threw berry pips down at the largest elephant. This angered the elephant and he pushed furiously hard against the tree. The tree shook, but only slightly. After a while, even little Munni became impudent. She threw berry pips at the elephant and teased him with shouts.

After a while, the sun was about to set. A reddish hue spread in that direction. There were few clouds, and they had turned orange-red. But the elephants refused to budge. The eldest boy, their leader, said, "Good, dear elephants stay here. We won't starve, but you will. Your children, who drinking milk from your trunk and they will certainly go hungry."

Darkness fell, but the elephants were still there. The children were eager to go home. If they weren't hungry, they could have stayed up all night. But they would soon fall asleep. Then some child might fall down in his sleep. Would the elephant have let

them go? No, he would have lifted them up with its trunk, then crushed them under his feet.

The wild boys had not only brought baskets but also ropes for tying them. First, they tied the younger children to a branch, then themselves. Now everything was settled. Night came, and two hours passed. Some eyes began to blink. Even some of the baby elephants lay down on the ground. If they could speak, they would have said, “Let these children go. They haven't harmed us in anyway.”

The children thought, “The elephants won't leave us alone all night.” As the third hour passed, they saw the elephants, their trunks raised, looking towards the village. Everyone stood up. There was some commotion. The children also heard the noise of the people. Yes, the villagers were coming towards the elephants. They covered themselves in leaves, so they couldn't see anyone, but they could see a light in the distance. The parents of the entire village rushed out to search their children. The elephants were frightened. Why would they be afraid of humans? Until now, they had only simple copper weapons, but now the fire god had become man's companion. All animals feared the fire. That's exactly what happened. All the elephants ran away for their lives.

24

During the Copper Age man became very strong with the copper sword. But at the same time, woman became inferior. Now man began considering himself superior in everything. Men worked outside. They tended the cows and sheep, and tilled the fields. Then one terrible thing happened. Men and women began to be sold in the market. Earlier, when two clans fought, they tried to kill each other. Their work consisted of hunting, fishing, and picking fruits from the forest. They did all the work. If called in men from other places, they would have to feed them! Now, men were no more cannibals — they didn't eat other human beings.

When farming became prevalent, more work had to be done in the fields. Rearing domestic animals increased their workload. During war, men and women from the enemy camp were captured and brought in and made to work, just like cattle. The men who were captured and put to work were called slaves. They were beaten with sticks like animals. They were given the worst food and the worst clothes. Once, the lady of the house was milking a cow. The cow was quite large. So, she said to the maidservant, "O Kali, what are you looking at? Bend your back and let me sit on you."

Aryans were cattle herders.

People milked milch animals.

Women began to do chores like fetching water.

Kali bent her back and became a stool. The mistress sat on her back and milked. Slaves had to completely obey the master. The master would say, “We don't want so many children.” Then the master would simply take the children away and sell them in the market. At that time, there were slave markets. Their mothers would weep, but the children would be taken away and sold. From the Copper Age, slaves began to be sold.

Slaves worked hard for fear of being beaten. They would start working while it was dark in the morning. They wouldn't have time to rest until midnight. If a mistress was good, she would take care of her slaves. Only the wealthy kept slaves. In the Stone Age, there was no rich or poor. People would gather whatever food was available in the forest and eat it together. From the Copper Age, everyone started living separately. They kept their belongings separately. Now, some became rich, while others became poor. With the advent of slaves, the rich became even richer.

25

The Copper Age lasted for more than two and a half thousand years. At that time, humans learned to count. There was still no alphabet. At that time, there were two siblings, Munna and Munni. Munna was the younger one, and Munni was the older one. Munni would listen to her parents, but Munna wouldn't. It wasn't Munna's fault either.

Munna never listened to his parents. Everyone knew about it. Munna had not one but two Munna's in his mind. He had one body, two minds. Whenever his parents asked him to do something, the mischievous Munna would be the first to say, "No, I don't want to do this."

Poor Munna tried to reason with himself, but the devil in his heart wouldn't listen. One day, Munna had upset his father by disobeying him. Then his angry father, would beat him with a stick. Munna wasn't that sad about the beating. His sister rubbed his back and showered love on him. She even kissed her brother's face and said, "Brother, why do you do this?" Munna hugged his sister and said, "Didi, there are two people in my heart. One is good, he says, 'Mom and Dad are good, they love us so much! Who else would want our well-being as much as they do?' But there's another thief who refuses. So, I just listen to Mom and Dad but can't obey them."

Munni said, “You shouldn't listen to a thief. You should just focus on whatever Mom says.” Munna said, “Getting involved in work weakens their words. Do you also have two Munni’s inside you?” “Yes, inside me, inside everyone, there are two minds. The thief never listens. The thief is the one who prevents us from listening to our parents. A thief is the one who, even after waking up, tells us not to leave our bed. If we listen to that thief, we can't get anything done.”

That day Munna understood. He too used to think that there were not one but two minds within us. Now he became alert to the thief in his mind. One day Amma said,

“Cut some grass and bring it.” The thief in his mind immediately whispered in his ear, “Don't do it.” Munna started saying, “Why shouldn't I listen to Amma?”

“It's hard work, why would you go cutting grass?” Munna explained, “I will cut grass.” The thief in his mind was subdued.

26

In the Stone Age here was a battle between the Black and Yellow tribes. I've already mentioned this earlier. It's not true that there weren’t wars after that. People of both castes lived cautiously. Later, another caste arrived — the Aryans. They

were neither yellow nor very dark. They were simply dark-skinned. They had one more thing in common: they made all kinds of weapons from copper. They sailed ships not only in the Ganges but also in the ocean. They didn't know how to sail them. They were simply large wooden ships, with wooden sails stretched on them, and the wind pulled them forcefully. These people were also skilled fighters!

The ancestors of the *Lepcha-Tamang* tribes, the Kirat tribes, were great fighters! And the Black people—the Nishads—were no less so. But these dark-skinned people were very clever in everything. They made different kinds of clothes, were very good craftsmen, and they raised cattle. They harnessed oxen to their chariots and drove them. They lived in cities, not villages. They built two-story and three-story brick houses and lived there. West of Amritsar, they first settled on the banks of the Indus River. Then they moved eastward. They had cities along the river banks. They traveled in large boats, taking their goods to sell.

The Indus people gradually reached Banaras. They built a fort there and opened shops. The Kirats and Nishads brought their wild game, tiger skins, deer skins, honey, wild fruits, and grains to the Indus people. The Indus people bought their goods cheaply and sold theirs dearly! Sometimes, this led to fights, in which many people got killed. Some would be sold as slaves. Gradually, the power of the Indus people grew. Other

people began to fear them. Soon the other tribes began to consider the Indus king as their own king. Every year they gave the king large sums of money.

The Kirats and Nishads did not know how to write. The Indus people knew writing. If they didn't have alphabets, how would they write letters to their children? In ancient times, when there were no trains or airplanes, people walked for months. If there hadn't been letters, then papa would have told the walking man, "Tell this to our daughter, tell this to our son." The that poor man couldn't remember all he was told? Yes, when other people saw the Indus people reading letters carved on wood or leaves, they were amazed. They began to think it was some kind of magic. But people wrote very little at that time. There was no paper yet, no slate or pencil. Sometimes they wrote on leather, sometimes on wood.

27

Yes, people of all three tribes — yellow, black, and dark — lived there. But they all kept a lookout for one another. Sometimes, when there wasn't a fight, they would laugh and talk. But all three tribes spoke three different languages. They couldn't understand each other. Near Banaras there was a forest, where there were elephants. In that same forest, there was a village of the Nishad people. There were many thatched

huts. They would sometimes leave them and settle elsewhere. In Banaras, the Indus people had built brick houses, and bullock carts ran on the roads. The Indus tribes had hired out servants to expand their trade to other parts. Trade was of all kinds. Some Nishad boys and girls were dancing and playing. In their reverie they forgot about going home. Just then, some men came from the forest. Immediately the dancing and singing stopped. The men surrounded the children and, drawing their swords, rebuked them loudly, “Beware! Don't scream. Otherwise, the sword will be thrust into your stomach.” Hearing this, everyone fell silent.

Then one of the boys spoke in Nishad dialect, “Come with us.” He took them to the Magahi River. A boat was already there. All the children's hands were tied. Sixteen boys and girls were placed on the boat. Their captors also sat in the boat. It was rainy season, so there was plenty of water. Otherwise, the boat wouldn't have sailed in the shallow river. Everything happened so quietly that no one noticed. The children were between eight and sixteen years old. They couldn't scream loudly. One child's ear was cut off for crying out aloud. Blood gushed out from his ear. The boat moved swiftly in the darkness. The children saw that the captors were of the yellow Kirat tribe. Only one of them spoke a little Nishad dialect. The children fell silent, but tears were welling up in their eyes. They were given pieces of bread and some fried fish. Due to fear their hunger had vanished. The little boy pleaded with them. They said, “Uncle, take us to Amma.”

Uncle said, “We're taking you there.”

Now all the children started laughing.

That very night, the boat crossed the Magahi River into the Ganges. A larger boat was parked there. The children were transferred to it. The Kirats left. Now the children were in the hands of people who spoke in their own language. They said, “We're taking you out of the forest and to the city.” Finally, they took them to the slave market in Banaras. There, they sat them under a tree. For an hour or two, they fed them. Then, many Indus people arrived. They bought the children for copper pieces. One or two buyers came. They divided up all the slaves among themselves. The children never saw their parents again.

28

That boy Munna from the Copper Age turned out to be very clever.

The boys had set a trap in the forest to catch monkeys. The trap was large, and a small hole had been dug in the center of it, and a lot of grain was placed in it. Munna and his friends sat behind the rope, keeping a distance. The monkeys came,

looked at the grain, and then moved away. The monkey's had no language, or else they would have said, "People of our own clan think we are fools." The boys kept sitting all day, but no foolish monkey got caught in the trap.

But Munna wasn't disheartened. He went there again the next day and set two traps. He set down the traps in the morning and arrived by noon. On the first day, the big monkey leader jumped up and scared them. After that no monkey came near. Today, another huge monkey came from somewhere. He had come just to fight. Then, there was a great fight or say a wrestling match? They bit each other, scratching with their nails. The other monkeys and children shied away in fear! The big monkey was known to beat even his own people, so no one liked him.

While the fight was raging, two baby monkeys quietly approached the trap. They liked the bait very much. They put their hands in. Munna pulled the ropes of both traps at once. But it was too late. One of the younger children got caught but the other ran away. Munna shouted. They chased the monkeys away. Someone suggested, "Let's roast that baby monkey and eat it." In those days, everyone ate monkeys.

Munna started crying. He hid the baby monkey in his lap. The baby was saved. Munna fed it milk from his goat along with grains. The baby monkey remained scared for a couple of days.

Then he came into Munna's lap. Munna taught him many things. After a few months, he started walking on both legs. Now he carried a stick on his shoulder!

He obeyed only Munna. Whenever other boys came near, he would chatter his teeth, pull his ears back, and snarl, waving his mouth and hands. Young children were very afraid of him. Munna would point his hand at a boy and ask the monkey to catch it. The monkey would go and place its hand on the boy's shoulder. The child would think it had come to eat him. But the monkey would never bite anyone. By now Munna was not very little; he was ten years old. Whenever he went out, the monkey sat on Munna's shoulder and picked out lice from his hair and ate them. At that time, people rarely combed their hair. Baths were also not a habit, so everyone's hair was infested with lice. The monkey would pick out lice with both hands and put them in his mouth so quickly that it was beyond description.

29

Munna's younger sister was Munni. She loved her brother very much. Seeing Munna's monkey, she too was tempted to have her own pet. Munna would say, “Take my monkey.” But Munni was afraid. One day, she saw a pair of baby parrots on a tree. The parrot had gone somewhere. Munni picked up one of

the babies and started feeding it small insects. She made a beautiful cage and placed it in it. Munni would talk to it, “Eat some fruit. Are you hungry?”

Three-four months passed this way. The baby parrot grew a lot of hair. Amma said, “Don't take it out, or it will run away.” Munni asked, “Why will it run away? I give it such good food and I find sweet fruits for it.”

Amma said, “It also has a mother. It will run to its mother.” Munni loved the parrot a lot, but she never let it out of its cage.

One day, she saw the parrot saying, “I'm hungry. Bring me a mango, bring me a banana.” Munni was astonished to hear this. The baby parrot was speaking human language. It was the first parrot to be raised in her village. Maybe Munni or someone else raised did. Previously, no one knew that parrots could speak human language. Munni would go out with her parrot, and Munna with his monkey.

One day, two women were fighting. Munni stood and watched. She placed the parrot's cage on the ground. Munni went home. Parrots stay quiet at night. In the morning, birds chirp on the trees outside. The crow's appearance is ugly, and his “caw-caw” is so very ugly! But other lovely birds are also chatterboxes. Munni gave the parrot sweet fruit early in the morning. After

eating, he too began speaking in the bird's voice. But he was speaking to a human. What else did he say? “Go and die! No, why should I die? You die, let the dogs and wolves eat you up.”

And what else did he say? When he was happy, he would say, “Munni ji, what are you doing? Are you eating? Bring some food, drink some sweet water. Munni ji, I'm hungry.” But he wasn't hungry. He was just saying it for the sake of speaking.

Munni grew old, and so did her daughter, but the parrot remained the same. Parrots had long lives. Munni told her granddaughter, “I raised this parrot when I was little. But now the parrot has become even more talkative.”

That’s what parrots are like! They even talk like humans!

30

And then there was Munna. He still played with copper. Munna saw a large eagle flying in the sky. It flew without moving its wings. Munna said, “Mom, I want to fly like an eagle too.” Munni, standing nearby, said, “Become an eagle, please!”

Munna said, “How can I become an eagle? I would like to

become one, but how can I?" Munni said, "Then you can't fly." Munna was thinking, "I fly in my dreams. So why can't I fly?" Amma explained, "No, son, humans don't fly. Fish don't fly either. Turtles and crabs don't fly. Lions and elephants don't fly either." Poor Munna was so small. He felt very sad. He floated in the water. He said, "Amma, we're not like fish, but we can swim in water."

Amma tried to explain, but Munna continued crying. Munni asked, "Amma, can only birds fly and no one else? Only those who fly have beaks. Only bats are the only animals with teeth, flying with their leathery wings." So, Munna said, "We too will attach leather wings." Mother kissed Munna's mouth and said, "Wings are not simply glued on! They grow at birth." Munna was very sad that he couldn't fly. He even asked one of his aunts. She also said that a human being can't fly, never has, and never will. Because a human being doesn't have wings. He also has teeth. Munna started thinking, "How nice it would be if our teeth became beaks and we grew wings!"

When Munna grew up, he too started saying, "A human being can't fly." Then a new child came. He saw himself flying in his dreams. He saw birds flying too. He too was tempted to fly. All the children started crying to fly.

When Papa was a child, even the motor hadn't been invented, let alone airplanes. But today, even children can flying, and

they can go very fast. No bird can fly so fast. Those who invented the airplane first studied a lot. They spent nights memorizing tables. They made iron, then made even harder iron. First, they flew in a balloon, then they made airplanes. Today, we travel so comfortably in airplanes; neither cars nor trains offer this much comfort.

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